



Website Redesign Guidelines

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Table of contents

I. Overview	3
1. Our Goal	3
i. State agency websites	3
ii. The state government network	3
iii. Online Government Services	3
2. Our Strategy	3
3. Summary	4
II. Our services	4
1. Design services	4
2. Web consultation services	4
III. Preparation	5
1. What is the purpose of the redesign?	5
2. What type of information does the website currently provide?	5
3. Who is the audience?	5
4. Is the website effectively branded?	5
5. Is there a need for tools, features or automation?	6
6. Who will be responsible for maintaining this website?	6
IV. Layout and Navigation	6
1. Common design and layout formats	6
i. “E-Wrapper”	6
ii. “C-Wrapper”	7
iii. “D-Wrapper”	7
iv. “O-Wrapper”	7
v. “A-Wrapper”	7
2. Menus and navigational elements	7
i. Horizontal menu	7
ii. Vertical menu	8
iii. In-line menu	8
V. Fonts, colors and styles	8
1. Fonts	8
2. Colors	9
i. Primary color	9
ii. Secondary color	9
iii. Tertiary color	9
iv. Environment colors	10
VI. Content Integration and Training	10
VII. Project Timeline	10

I. Overview

1. Our Goal

RI.gov's key objectives are threefold:

i. State agency websites

Maximize the value of the information provided by a state agency website by improving presentation and accessibility using a standardized design template;

ii. The state government network

Maximize the value of the information provided by state government by creating an integrated, unified network of state agency websites using a consistent, effective approach in (i).

iii. Online Government Services

Research, develop, and implement online government services using a standardized service template and payment engine;

2. Our Strategy

RI.gov will work with the agency to achieve these goals by providing the information necessary for the agency to draft their requirements and prepare their content before the development phase begins.

Drawing on our experience and our design expertise, RI.gov will create an intuitive, consistent user interface using proven design principles and techniques, while maintaining key navigation, layout and style elements found on the RI.gov portal.

RI.gov will adhere to the accessibility and usability standards set forth by the IRMB to satisfy both Section 508 accessibility requirements and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Priority 1 checkpoints.

During the development phase RI.gov will work closely with the agency to accommodate all of the agency's requirements, and to create a prototype template that satisfies the objectives described above in (i) and (ii).

RI.gov will provide initial training and support following the completion of the prototype template to ensure that the agency is comfortable working with it during the process of integrating their content.

3. Summary

By providing the agency with a structured approach to their website redesign, we hope to simplify the development process. RI.gov's extensive website development experience will help the agency create a more effective online resource within a user-friendly environment, while strengthening the state's network of government websites.

II. Our services

1. Design services

RI.gov offers a template-based website design to any state or local Rhode Island government agency free of charge.

The RI.gov templates are user-tested, provide consistent navigation for an enhanced user experience, are fully accessible and meet W3C and Rhode Island Web standards, and will be implemented for your agency website at no cost.

RI.gov also offers high-end logo, icon design and branding at no charge.

2. Web consultation services

RI.gov offers consultation services to government agencies. If your agency needs help with navigation, design, user testing, accessibility, software applications, etc, feel free to contact us.

For online help, visit <http://www.ri.gov/resource/> for a wealth of information designed to assist government webmakers. This resources site is packed full of useful information, tools, tips & tricks, and guides to help your agency create a more effective online presence.

RI.gov is available for a consultation about your old or new agency website, and we're available to meet with you at your office.

III. Preparation

To help us streamline the development process, there are a number of important questions an agency should answer about their website before work begins. This checklist should be referred to in preparation for the website redesign:

1. What is the purpose of the redesign?

Does the website just need a facelift, or does it need a complete overhaul? What could be improved in the redesign? Are the present navigation, layout and look-and-feel working, or do these need to be addressed in the redesign?

2. What type of information does the website currently provide?

Is the content offered on this website for reference or informational purposes? Examples of reference materials are laws, statutes, rules & regulations and other documents that are text-intensive. Informational content includes news, forms, applications, images and other less text-intensive materials.

3. Who is the audience?

Is this website geared mostly for state employees, the general public, or a select group or organization? Will the audience know what they're looking for or not? I.e.: Will the audience be familiar with the content offered on this website, or will they need help finding it?

4. Is the website effectively branded?

Is the agency logo clear and legible? Does it effectively represent the agency and the materials offered by the website? Will this logo fit the new design or vice versa? If a new logo was to be created, which elements would be most important, and what message should it convey?

5. Is there a need for tools, features or automation?

Would the addition of a tool or feature create a more useful resource and a more valuable website? What might be some of the tools? E.g.: Search tool, calendar, database queries, payments, etc.

6. Who will be responsible for maintaining this website?

Once the prototype is complete and a template created, RI.gov will work with the agency's webmaker to ease the integration of the website content with the template. Once this integration is underway, it will become the responsibility of the webmaker and the agency.

IV. Layout and Navigation

RI.gov will work with the agency to determine which layout structure and navigational elements will work best with the content of the website.

1. Common design and layout formats

- i. "E-Wrapper"



This layout format presents content between a header and footer element and takes advantage of the full width of the content area making it most useful for text- or data-intensive material.

ii. “C-Wrapper”



A very popular layout format, content is presented between a header and footer element and adjacent to a sidebar element. This sidebar is most often used for navigation menus and related content.

iii. “D-Wrapper”



Similar to the “C-Wrapper”, this format presents the content before the sidebar element, and while it is not as commonly used, it can prove to be the right layout solution for some applications.

iv. “O-Wrapper”



With both header and footer elements, and two sidebars, this is a widely used format. This layout is most useful for informational material that does not require a large area, while also providing space for related content.

v. “A-Wrapper”



Similar to the “O-Wrapper”, this layout is used most often for presenting informational material where a footer element is not required

2. Menus and navigational elements

i. Horizontal menu



A popular space-saving menu format, the horizontal menu is best suited for text- or data-intensive material that requires the full width of the page. It can

comfortably accommodate between 4 and 8 category names, and is an effective navigational tool when used in conjunction with a submenu.

ii. Vertical menu



The vertical menu is a widely used navigational element that lends itself well to many types of layout formats and content types. It is best suited for websites that have a large number of categories and/or subcategories that would otherwise not fit the horizontal format. It can be used effectively in conjunction with a submenu, and while it is usually found in the left column, it can also be used in the right column for particular applications.

iii. In-line menu



In-line menus are most often used with text- or data-intensive material (e.g.: a table of contents) whose own navigational structure is separate from that of the website. Because of this, it can often be used within the content area on the same page as an existing horizontal or vertical menu element.

Once the menu format has been decided upon, it will be necessary to revisit the navigational structure and naming conventions in use on the existing site to ensure that these will work for the redesign. It's often best to keep the number of menu options under ten, and to use no more than one or two words to describe each menu item (e.g.: "Press releases", "Feedback", "Help topics", etc.).

V. Fonts, colors and styles

1. Fonts

In the interests of maintaining consistency across state government websites, RI.gov recommends that the agency adopt Verdana as their primary font face. Verdana is a sans-serif font that is clearly legible at different sizes and different weights, making it an ideal choice for both text- and data-intensive applications.

However, the agency may elect to choose a different primary font face, or additional fonts for applications and services within their website that would benefit from a different choice.

2. Colors

In addition to a clear layout format and an effective navigational structure, color choice can also provide valuable information to the user. RI.gov makes use of color in the following ways:

i. Primary color

In this context, “Primary color” refers to a color’s importance relative to others used within the same design. Generally, a primary color should not be overpowering, but rather it should be a cool, dark color (blues, greens, dark reds, grays, etc.) because it will be seen throughout the website. The primary color for the RI.gov portal is blue, of which there are four variations. Each of these variations is intended for a different purpose:

- Dark blue: #001166 (header element, toolboxes, headlines)
- Medium blue: #003399 (links, menu buttons, subheadings)
- Light blue: #99CCFF (backgrounds, borders)
- Very light blue: #DDEEFF (content background)

ii. Secondary color

The secondary color is used to highlight elements on the page by differentiating them from the primary color. As a highlight color it can be warmer and lighter (reds, yellows, oranges, magentas, etc.) which will help it to stand out from the page. The secondary color for the RI.gov portal is gold (a yellowish orange), of which there are two variations:

- Gold: #FFCC33 (submenus, link boxes)
- Light gold: #FFF6CC (link box background)

iii. Tertiary color

Occasionally, the need may arise for a third color whose function it is to highlight elements on the page that are separate from the secondary color. These may include promotional materials, notices, and short-term content offerings. The same rules for choosing a secondary color can be applied here, while also complementing the existing color palette.

iv. Environment colors

It's important to choose a few additional colors that will be used in various situations. For instance, red is the logical choice for an error condition or an alert, while orange is useful for less critical messages. Green, blue and red are often used for subheadings, table data and footnotes.

Other than the existing design, background colors should be used sparingly in the content area. Most often it isn't necessary to use background colors other than for the purpose of isolating an item, or separating data in a table. As a general rule of thumb, background colors should be very light: body text should still be clearly legible. Table data is often best seen over a combination of white and light gray. Be particular about using light text over dark backgrounds: use it chiefly for table column and row headers.

VI. Content Integration and Training

RI.gov will create all the necessary section and subsection templates, branding, and a style sheet document for the new website. It will be the responsibility of the agency to integrate their content, so it is important to prepare this material beforehand as it will make the process easier.

RI.gov will work closely with the individual responsible for the agency's content integration and website maintenance. Training will be provided to demonstrate how the templates are used, and to help them start the process of content integration. RI.gov will provide the agency with additional support as needed.

VII. Project Timeline

1. Agency gathers web team, prepares project requirements and goals;
2. Agency meets with the RI.gov team. RI.gov presents site templates and standards, reviews agency materials from (1);
3. RI.gov prepares prototype template, branding, and styles for agency review;
4. Upon approval, RI.gov builds all necessary templates for agency site;
5. RI.gov trains agency webmaker(s) in content integration and site maintenance using templates;

6. Agency approves launch (if new site, Jeffrey Vale from OLIS must be contacted to establish web hosting);